Why Sauron Was Called 'The Necromancer'

The Most Horrifying Location in Lord of the Rings Isn't in Middle-earth

By Ben Hardwick

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The Lord of the Rings shows off some truly horrific locations, but few are as horrifying as the deadly Void, which lingers far from Middle-earth.

Middle-earth is no stranger to terrifying locations. From the spider-infested Mirkwood to the fiery Mordor of *The Lord of the Rings*, there are plenty of dark places across the land. However, the franchise's most terrifying place of all wasn't even on Middle-earth but instead sat inside a mysterious doorway far across the west side of the planet. It was a place where the darkest powers of the world were imprisoned for eternity.

While Middle-earth certainly has fantastical places and magic, the land is still very much grounded in reality. It's off the shores of Middle-earth, where *The Lord of the Rings* leans into the mythological side of things, with the Elven land of Valinor and powerful gods watching over the world. And it's in this area that rests a door to the Void, a space without time that existed before the universe itself and even housed the world's greatest villain.

Lord of the Ring's Mysterious Doorway, Explained

The west of Middle-earth is where the Elves sailed to at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, but far beyond their destination sat another magical place -- the Door of Night. This doorway acts as a barrier between Middle-earth and the Void, where few are allowed to enter. To describe what is inside is seemingly impossible for any regular Man, as the area lacks all time and space yet is still able to exist within the universe.

During the early days of Middle-earth, this door was created for the Sun to continue its constant cycle. For as it passed overhead, the Sun would finally enter into the Door of Night as light set on Middle-earth. It would then reappear many hours later in the east of Middle-earth, leaving through a doorway called the Gates of Morning. And while this is a wholesome use for something so overwhelming, it soon became the most deadly prison in the world.

The Imprisonment of Morgoth Gave the Void a New Use

Long before *The Lord of the Rings*, the dark lord terrorizing Middle-earth was Morgoth -- a being even more powerful than Sauron. For centuries he waged war all over the planet until finally meeting his end at the hands of Middle-earth's most powerful god-like beings. However, while he was beaten, his spirit could still persist like Sauron's, so their only choice was to imprison the dark lord once and for all.

Knowing that Morgoth would relentlessly try to return, he was thrown into the one place where his existence would be meaningless, the Void. And there he was to remain forever, floating in a place that the mind cannot even comprehend. Although, he would still be

conscious and constantly plotting a way to one day break through the Door of Night, which Tolkien hinted at on a couple of occasions.

Nevertheless, the Door of Night sounds like an inescapable gateway leading into hell. It's even rumored that the dark creatures of Middle-earth originated from within, which makes the places all the more terrifying. But at the very least, the higher powers of the world keep guard so that the people of the world must never face Morgoth's wrath ever again.

Why Sauron Was Called 'The Necromancer' Before The Lord of the Rings

By Ben Hardwick
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Sauron is referred to as "The Necromancer" a few times before The Lord of the Rings, and it stems from the dark magic he used on misguided spirits.

Before the events of *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron spent hundreds of years rebuilding his strength in the abandoned fortress of Dol Guldur. When this is brought up in *The Hobbit*, Sauron is referred to as "The Necromancer," a name that also appears a few other times in Tolkien's notes. Because of this, there's some confusion surrounding Sauron's necromantic powers and ability to raise the dead.

In fantasy writings, the term necromancer usually refers to someone who can communicate with the dead. But the modern-day necromancer is somewhat different from classic fiction, as the popularity of games like *Dungeons & Dragons* painted the image of a dark wizard who

raises skeletons from the ground as their minions. So the idea of Sauron being a necromancer has caused some debate in the fandom.

Could Sauron Raise the Dead in The Lord of the Rings?

Author J.R.R. Tolkien took the name Necromancer from old mythologies, with the term necromancy being used in Greek tales of Odysseus visiting the realm of the dead. However, most uses of necromancer simply refer to someone who uses dark magics, not necessarily one who communicates with the dead. Thus, when Tolkien gave Sauron the name "Necromancer," he was just referring to his evil powers in general -- although that's not to say Sauron had no connection to the undead.

The question of "Could Sauron raise the dead?" is not as simple as it may seem. On the surface, the answer is no; he had no power that could simply raise the dead from the ground. However, Tolkien made it clear that everyone in Middle-earth has a spirit and that Sauron was able to commune with many of them at will. His loyal Nazgûl servants are a prime example, as their spirits were trapped in the shadowy Wraith-world of the dead, while their bodies were (somewhat) alive in the physical world. Therefore, the Nazgûl could be seen as living dead, even if they never died in the traditional sense.

Sauron Used Spirits as His Minions

Wights were shape-shifting phantoms who dwelled in the darkest places of Middle-earth. These creatures appeared dead with blue glowing eyes and skeletal hands and are a prime example of undead serving under Sauron. While little is known about their origin, it's heavily implied that the Wights of the Barrow-down area were once Men who succumbed to a plague and had their spirits trapped by the Witch-king -- who got his powers from Sauron.

There's even mention of Sauron tricking Elven spirits before they pass on to "the other side." Deceased Elves were judged by Mandos, a god-like being who decides if a spirit is worthy of joining their kin. Those who are denied passage to the Halls of Mandos were left adrift and often contacted by the Dark Lord himself. He would entice them with the promise of new bodies, with the goal of binding them as a servant.

While Sauron may not casually raise zombies during *The Lord of the Rings*, his title of Necromancer still works with modern fantasy. He surrounded himself with death and exploited any corrupted spirits he could find; plus, he could be seen as a living dead himself, as he still returned after Isildur destroyed Sauron's body on the slopes of Mount Doom.